

IN SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES,

MARCH 6, 1826.

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Mr. LLOYD, from the Committee on Commerce, to whom was referred a resolution directing an inquiry into the expediency of making an appropriation for the removal of the obstructions and improving the navigation of the Bay and harbor of Mobile,

REPORTED:

That, from the statements furnished them in the case, it appears that the inconvenience, delay, and consequent expense, attending the present circuitous route for vessels entering the port of Mobile, and drawing over seven feet of water, are extremely burthensome to the shipping and mercantile interests, as well as injurious to the city of Mobile, and to the agricultural part of the State; it being represented, as the present channel now runs, that vessels drawing over seven feet water instead of sailing directly into port, with the same wind that brings them into the Bay, are compelled, in consequence of a comparatively, trifling obstruction in the pass at the mouth of the river, to ascend Spanish River, over shoals and mud-flats, through a tortuous and difficult channel, to its junction with Mobile, about ten miles above the city, and then to tack and beat down a river less than five hundred yards wide, in an opposite direction, with a head wind to gain the port; the injurious effect of which, frequently is, that vessels, for the want of pilots, or the shifting of the shoals, during freshets, get aground, and so remain for weeks, and occasionally for a length of time sufficient, as it is alleged, to prosecute a voyage to the West Indies, or to any other port in the United States, however remote; and are also frequently unable, from the heavy North winds which prevail in the winter season, to beat up the river without very great delay and detention, and that, rather than incur these disadvantages, vessels frequently remain at anchor, between Dog river and the channel, exposed to the vicissitudes of the weather in an unsafe anchorage, and subjected to heavy charges for lighterage, both in discharging and taking in their cargoes; all which inconveniences, it is stated, may be avoided, or in a great measure alleviated, by clearing out the channel and removing the obstructions in the Western or Choctaw pass of the river, occasioned principally by a mud flat, in which a number of logs are embedded, and at an expense, in the opinion of the Harbormaster and Wardens of the port, from an actual survey thereof, not exceeding ten thousand dollars.

From a reliance on these representations, and a consideration by the Committee, that the city of Mobile is the principal, if not the only

port, of the fertile and rapidly increasing State of Alabama, and the emporium from which a great part of the supplies, not only of the State but of West Florida, are received, and whither their valuable produce of cotton is directed; for which article the port is, even now, much frequented by shipping, not only for Europe but for the flourishing manufactories of the North, notwithstanding the existing disadvantages from the shoal and hazardous navigation to which they are at present exposed, and which also, at times, occasions a considerable proportion of the produce received at Mobile to be shipped in boats or small vessels, to New Orleans, on account of the obstructions in the river and the difficulties of the navigation; thus depressing the growth of the city, and subtracting from the rewards of the cultivators of the soil, the enhanced expense of sending their products for sale to a market in another State.

From a view of all which circumstances, in connection with the rising consequence of the port of Mobile, which, from the Treasury returns, has increased, in the amount of its exports, nearly seven-fold in five years; from the recent political existence, the sparse settlement, and limited fiscal ability of the State, as well as the correspondent advantage which would enure to the General Government from the increase of its commerce; the Committee are of opinion that the interests alike of the United States, the State of Alabama, and the adjoining country, would be promoted by improving the navigation of the river and harbor of Mobile, so as to render the approach to the city more facile and accessible than it now is, and for vessels of a greater draft of water; and, therefore, report a bill for the accomplishment of those objects.